

Can SALT II Really Be Verified?

The proponents of the SALT II treaty won a mild propaganda victory when the 15-member Senate Select Committee on Intelligence released on October 5 its unanimous findings: that the pact "enhances the ability of the United States to monitor" the strategic capabilities of the Soviets.

A number of SALT II opponents believe that the hardliners on the committee—such as Senators Henry Jackson (D.-Wash.) and Jake Garn (R.-Utah)—took a calculated risk in agreeing to sign the "consensus" report rather than file a strong minority dissent, since much of the media have been playing up the findings as supportive of the Administration's contention that SALT II is verifiable.

The Jacksons and Garns agreed to the report, since it didn't fully embrace the Administration's line on verification. But despite the significant caveats, the report, in certain paragraphs, came close enough to echoing what President Carter has been saying as to give SALT supporters a boost.

Nevertheless, properly read, the report should give far more cause for concern about our capacity to monitor SALT II than the media accounts would suggest. Moreover, the report is astonishing in that it bluntly warns that the Soviets may very well make a deliberate effort to violate the treaty's terms.

The SALT II accords, says the report, have provisions which "enhance" our monitoring capabilities, but "there are other provisions which impose very difficult monitoring burdens." There are a number of "ambiguities" in the treaty, and there are "some provisions... which can be monitored with only a low level of confidence." Unfortunately, those provisions are not discussed in any detail.

The committee "also finds that the present capabilities of the national reconnaissance system

could be degraded by the use of changed practices on the part of the Soviet Union and through concealment and deception. *Some of these changed practices would be permitted under the treaty.*" (Emphasis added.)

What is even more extraordinary, however, is the theme that consistently runs through the report: that the Carter Administration is proposing to enter into an arms agreement with the Soviets that we are certain they will try to violate in both letter and spirit.

On the basis of the SALT I record, says the report, the committee "believes that the Soviet Union will push to the greatest extent possible any advantages which the provisions or ambiguities of the SALT II treaty might permit. Further, the Soviet Union will probably continue nearly all of its present concealment and deception practices, and additional concealment and deception practices may be attempted."

The United States, in fact, "must expect" unanticipated Soviet efforts to circumvent SALT II, and be willing to "aggressively pursue questions of Soviet compliance with the treaty...."

So worried are the senators about Soviet compliance that they warn: "Various possible Soviet 'cheating scenarios' should be developed.... On the basis of these scenarios, similar 'warning signs' should be formulated."

What particularly distresses tough-minded SALT observers is that the Soviets deliberately and consistently undermined SALT I. Former Defense Secretary Melvin Laird insisted the Soviets "repeatedly, flagrantly and, indeed, contemptuously violated the treaties to which we have adhered." U.S. monitoring equipment, he noted, "clearly showed" the Russians were testing radar and "mobile components" for use with an antiballistic missile defense system in violation of explicit treaty language.

Equally significant was the violation of our unilateral statement designed to prevent the Soviets from upgrading their SS-11 light missile into a heavy missile with first-strike capabilities. In 1972, Secretary of State Henry Kissinger assured the

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Congress that—even though there was no definition of a heavy missile in the SALT I agreement—that the SS-11 could not be significantly enlarged. But this was an American interpretation of SALT I, an interpretation not explicitly agreed to by the Soviets.

Immediately after the signing of SALT I, the Soviets began testing the SS-19 as a replacement for the SS-11. The SS-19 turned out to be 50 per cent larger, carried six times as many warheads and is considered to be a first-strike weapon every bit as menacing to our strategic force as the SS-18. Because the Soviets had not specifically agreed to our interpretation of a heavy missile, however, the Russians claimed the SS-19 development was not a SALT I violation.

Largely as a result of this episode, U.S. negotiators for SALT II insisted to the Congress they were swearing off trying to bind the Russians with unilateral interpretations, but, in fact, the SALT II pact contains what amounts to the very same kind of dangerous unilateral declarations.

On Aug. 16, 1977, for instance, the United States *again* tried to get the Soviets to agree to the definition of a heavy missile, but the Soviets, according to Secretary of State Cyrus Vance, "did not respond" to our definition, and, indeed, there is no precise language in the treaty detailing the properties of a heavy ICBM. What's more, the Soviets have given us *no* data on the size of their existing missiles or the dimensions of their silos.

What is extremely significant about this absence of data is that the SALT II treaty says the Soviets cannot test or deploy new missiles that are 5 per cent larger than their existing missiles. But since they refuse to tell us the size of their missiles, how will we be able to effectively challenge them if they decide to test and deploy missiles that are considerably larger than the 5 per cent limitation? They can simply deny that our estimates of the size of their missiles at the time of the SALT II signing were correct.

Thus, despite some of the phrases used in the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, SALT II is *not* verifiable, and, in fact, contains language so loose that the Russians will be able to heavily exploit the pact to America's great disadvantage.